



National
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East Asia Review

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EAST ASIA REVIEW (U)

12 December 1978

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North Korea: Ping-Pong Diplomacy

North Korea is moving forward with plans to play host to the 35th World Table Tennis Championships in April 1979. Judging from Pyongyang's advance publicity for the biennial championship matches, the regime clearly hopes to use the event to bolster its international standing. Most foreign attention will be focused on the presence and activities of the US team and on whether South Korea will participate in the competition.

During the last championships in England in the spring of 1977, Pyongyang lobbied for and obtained the right to host the 1979 meet. The Pyongyang championships did not begin to attract much foreign interest until it became known last April that the US Table Tennis Federation planned to send a team to the games. US participation was facilitated by President Carter's decision in April 1977 to lift the ban on travel by US citizens to North Korea and several other Communist states.

Since last June, North Korea has periodically issued press releases describing its elaborate preparations for the championships. The games will be held in Pyongyang's 5-year-old indoor stadium with a seating capacity of 20,000. Foreign players and team managers will stay at the nearby 18-story Changgwangsan Hotel. Journalists and tourists will be boarded at other hotels in the capital. Telex and international phones are to be installed at the stadium and "other places." Several well-known North Korean tourist attractions apparently will be open to visitors attending the games, including the Mount Kumgang area along the east coast some 15 miles north of the Demilitarized Zone.

North Korea is offering reduced fare flights to participating teams and foreign visitors from a number of important overseas air terminals, including Singapore, Karachi, Cairo, and Geneva. This arrangement is designed in part to overcome years of self-imposed isolation; all

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civil flights into North Korea must pass through either China or the Soviet Union. It is also designed to encourage a large turnout.

The Pyongyang meet brings to mind Peking's so-called Ping-Pong diplomacy of 1971 that led to political talks at the highest level between the US and China. North Korean President Kim Il-song would like to open similar high level talks with the US aimed at achieving a peace agreement tied to a withdrawal of all US forces from Korea. For the present, however, Pyongyang probably has more modest goals.

Although the American team will be in Pyongyang in an unofficial capacity, the regime will certainly use the occasion to foster the impression of increasing US recognition of the legitimacy of the North Korean regime. Kim Il-song can be an adept and even gracious host, and he may decide to meet personally with the US team--with appropriate coverage by the international press. By projecting the image of a reasonable and respected member of the international community, North Korea may also hope to give added impetus to sentiment in the United States for a speedier withdrawal of US military forces from South Korea, or at least help to disarm US critics of the Carter administration's troop reduction program.

For South Korea, the Ping-Pong meet in Pyongyang presents a political dilemma of some magnitude. Teams from North and South Korea have competed against each other in selected Asian tournaments, but never on Korean soil. North Korea refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Pak government and, although it has said that it will invite all members of the international table tennis federation, Pyongyang probably will adopt a number of protocol and procedural maneuvers that will make it difficult for South Korea to participate.

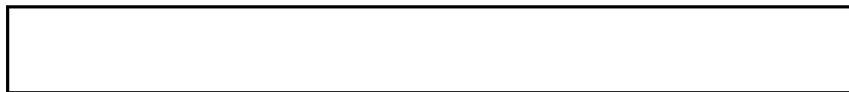
If South Korea does send a team, it runs a risk of encountering embarrassing and possibly intolerable conditions that could force a walkout by the South Korean athletes. On the other hand, if Seoul boycotts the meet, it will give the appearance of being timid or obstructionist. Roy Evans, the president of the international federation, plans to go to Pyongyang a month before the meet to smooth over any procedural difficulties,

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and to ensure that Pyongyang keeps its pledge to welcome
all federation members.

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Marcos' Philippines at Year's End (S)

Over the past six months, President Marcos has had some success in deflecting attacks on his martial-law regime by human rights critics. With the convening of the transitional parliament on 12 June, Marcos achieved his goal of creating the impression that definite movement is taking place toward eventual political normalization. He has also dramatized a number of individual steps concerning personal liberties and court reform.

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As a result, Marcos has been able to devote considerably more time and energy to what he evidently has concluded are his most pressing domestic and international problems. These issues, however, are interrelated and the success in resolving one will depend necessarily on progress in the other areas. They include:

- The timing and complicated political maneuvering associated with his apparent decision to name his 48-year-old wife as deputy prime minister--thus making her his logical successor.
- A successful resolution of the complex negotiations on US bases in the country, including agreement on the delimitation of US facilities; authority and responsibilities of the respective US and Philippine base commanders; and a compensation package that Marcos can defend as consistent with Philippine security requirements.
- The continuing and vexing Muslim insurrection in the south, which Marcos realizes could affect the receptivity of the US Congress toward whatever security assistance package finally emerges from the bases negotiations.

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The First Lady

Immediately following his 3 August announcement of a new decree on succession in the event of his death or incapacitation, President Marcos dropped several hints that he intended to appoint his wife as deputy prime minister--thus grooming her for eventual succession. [REDACTED]

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Under the new decree, the speaker of the National Assembly (a distinguished former Supreme Court chief justice) would succeed Marcos as ceremonial president, and a still-undesignated deputy prime minister will temporarily become prime minister. The new president must then "immediately convene the legislature to select new permanent successors to both positions from among its members." [REDACTED]

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For the present, Marcos is, once again, implementing a scenario that is familiar to all Philippine politicians, and one that he has employed with finesse in the past. After a flurry of rumors, news stories, and well-orchestrated petitions from pro-Marcos assemblymen, there followed suitable demurrers from Marcos' wife Imelda. [REDACTED]

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Having raised the probability of his wife's appointment, it would now be consistent for Marcos to pull back, defer action for a while, and allow Imelda time to build up a base of political power in her own right through the personal staffing of her new cabinet ministry dealing with city planning. [REDACTED]

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In addition to the necessity for establishing closer relations with the civilian technocrats, the support of the Philippine military remains crucial to the First Lady's succession plans. The idea of some sort of working arrangement between Imelda and the military, which seemed unlikely a few years ago, now does not appear so far-fetched. [REDACTED]

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Imelda has gradually emerged as a key figure in the Philippine political power structure by controlling significant perquisites and positions and by building personal loyalties. The military has responded to the grow-

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ing reality of her power by avoiding disparagement of her ambitions. Whether Imelda can put this relationship on a more enduring basis will depend upon a range of variables, and the military will be watching closely to see if she can demonstrate greater constancy of behavior and reliability than in the past. [REDACTED]

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The Bases Negotiations

Marcos may well defer any final decision on his wife's appointment until agreement on a mutually satisfactory amendment to the US-Philippine military bases agreement is reached. He is aware that if a settlement can be reached soon, the US Administration will be in a position to include funds for the first year of an agreed compensation package in the fiscal year 1980 budget request, which will be presented to the US Congress in January. [REDACTED]

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Marcos also understands that the administration will use its "best efforts" to secure the appropriations from Congress needed to fund the compensation package on an annual basis--an offer intended to meet his concern over the absence of a multiyear commitment. [REDACTED]

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North Korea Chronology (U)

10 November

Four North Korean MIG-17 Fresco jet fighters make their first flight in Madagascar. The aircraft, supposedly "on loan" to Madagascar, are flown by North Korean pilots and serviced by North Korean ground crews. 

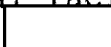
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18 November

An authoritative Chinese People's Daily commentator article, marking the third anniversary of the UN General Assembly resolution calling for the withdrawal of US forces from South Korea, endorses North Korea's formal protest over the recently activated US - South Korean combined forces command. 

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20 November

North Korean President Kim Il-song meets with the party leadership of South Pyongan Province and exhorts them to provide better support and guidance to industrial facilities in the province. 

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27-28 November

Kim Il-song presides over the 17th plenum of the party central committee and, in a speech on 28 November, outlines the 1979 economic plan. [REDACTED]

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27-29 November

The so-called Second World Conference for the Reunification of Korea meets in Tokyo under the joint sponsorship of the Japanese Socialist Party, the Japanese Communist Party, and Sohyo, the major Japanese trade union federation. The conference resolution supports North Korean demands for the withdrawal of US forces from Korea and the dissolution of the UN Command, but it avoids harsh criticism of Japanese and US policy toward the Korean peninsula. [REDACTED]

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